

## Forefathers' Day — November 24

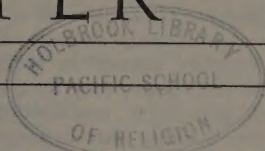
THE CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

# NEWS LETTER

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### AND AS FOR NEW ENGLAND CONGREGATIONALISM

Perhaps readers of the News Letter have noticed that recently extended report has been given of the strength of Congregationalism on the Pacific Coast (winter, 1957), and the Spring News Letter 1957 noted some historical incidents related to early cooperation between liberal freedom seekers in the South with early New Englanders. In passing, a new incident in this connection has just come to my attention. In the Continental Congress (1776) that prepared the Declaration of Independence, John Hancock of Massachusetts was the President of the Assembly. During the discussion of a declaration of independence the Southerners took a very active part in developing the document, Jefferson being the writer. As the discussion drew to a close, Hancock vacated the chair to which he called Benjamin Harrison of Virginia in order that this loyal leader might have the honor of putting the question and of announcing the vote!

In this issue some note has been taken of the status of Congregationalism in New England in 1776 at the end of one hundred and fifty-six years of Colonial history. At that time there were 1,940 churches of all faiths organized in Colonial America. (See page 2.) The Congregational churches dominated New England. In many of the Colonies it was the official church. For example, in Connecticut every town (township) was required by law to maintain at public charge a church of that order, and the influence of the clergy was such that it could almost be said that what Hooker "preached on Sunday was made law on Monday." The famous "Blue Laws" published in England at a later date was a fake publication, but it is true that the moral and ethical standards of Moses as recorded in the Bible were largely determinative in New England during this period. In New Hampshire the Congregational churches were by law known as the churches of the standing order, and today, almost 200 years later, the Sunday laws of that state represent the continuing influence of early church teachings, manifest in so many other ways in New England.

Of course, we always have to keep in mind that many teachings of the Old Testament are too harsh. For example, in the early days of Massachusetts the General Court asked Dr. Mather to draw up a moral code based on Old Testament teachings. He made the list which provided the death penalty to more than a hundred offences. This was too much Bible for even the Court of that day and the code died aborning, although the laws of that time reflected Old Testament standards to a large degree. On the other hand their long list of great colleges and the influence of their general education was far-reaching. Their continual struggle for a larger share of freedom both for the individual and for the community was formative. The development of democratic procedures as practiced

Continued from page 1.

in the church meetings and transferred to the annual town meetings made these meetings schools of democracy on the true level where every citizen was taught right methods and true objectives. And ever be it remembered that New England was the birthplace of missionary interest and activity both at home and abroad, and as New Englanders have gone outside in great numbers through the years since, they have taken their ideals and procedures contributing to our common life, qualities that had come to distinguish the "American Way" as the world accepted characterization of a type of human society that makes possible the preservation of human worth and the protection of the fundamental rights of all men. F. L. F.

### Original Elements in the American Heritage

An important study of how the Colonial period developed into sufficient unity to form the basis of a new culture and fruited first in the Declaration of Independence, and after trial by war into the U. S. Constitution, is that of the Continental Congress itself. When the members of that body stood up one after another and as one said, "placed a rope around their necks in signing it," they laid the foundations firm.

There were three main lines of church influence: the Puritan element of the Anglican (1607) with 34 members of the Congress, the Congregational (1620) with 13 members, and the Presbyterian with 6 members. These three groups totaled 53 signers out of a total of 56.

As we take pride in the Congregational contribution let us be equally thankful for the compatriots in these other historical groups and give homage where it is due. Let us give heartfelt thanks for the contribution of our Fathers and follow in their steps in giving full credit to these other groups whose lives and labors have enriched the American culture and helped mightily to form the ideals and to strengthen the purposes of the "American Way." As we contemplate our Forefathers and give thanks let us also in all generosity and warmth bring within our grateful memory these other worthy leaders. There should be no selfishness in our thanksgiving.

### Rhode Island Congregationalists Ask Disarmament Efforts

Recognizing that huge armament programs do not necessarily lead to peace but rather to war, the Rhode Island Congregational Christian

conference at its 150th annual meeting May 4-5 proposed a worldwide 20-year plan for total disarmament to be undertaken through the United Nations. The proposal, which originated in the conference's social action committee, was forwarded to President Eisenhower.

Give thanks and clasp thy heritage  
To be alive in such an age!

Angela Morgan

### American Churches After the First 150 Years

Churches and Ministers in 1776		
Denomination	Ministers	Churches
Congregational	575	700
Baptist	350	380
Church of England	250	300
Presbyterian	153	320
Dutch Reformed	25	60
Lutheran	25	60
German Reformed	25	60
Roman Catholic	26	52
Moravian	12	8
	1,441	1,940

From *Pageant of America*, Weigle, Yale University Press, p. 119.

### Purposeful Anniversaries

The First Church of Christ, Springfield, Mass., celebrates its Forefathers' Day annually on a Sunday in May. Careful preparations are made, music is patterned after that of the founding day program of 1637. The Deacons and Deaconesses are garbed in historic garments each group in its historic section. A "Tithing Man" is on hand to waken any who nod. Historical displays are arranged for the service. Recognition is given to those who have been members for fifty years.

The services and the sermon are in accord with the theme. This annual service has become one of city-wide significance.

The Hawaiian Board observes an annual commemoration of the arrival of the first missionaries in the Islands in 1802. This annual Board celebration is often held in connection with a local church dedication or other specific event, but the whole group of churches take part in the Board celebration. In this way the historic interest is tied in with the present adding significance to both the past and the present. The day selected is usually the third Sunday in October.

### News Notes

Rev. Verne D. Morey who won his Ph.D. at Harvard in American Church History and who was pastor at Bridgton, Maine, has accepted a position in the Maine State Educational



Department where he will specialize in State religious history.

Rev. Arvel Steece, Yale Ph.D., pastor at Princeton, Minn., and State Historian, has been called to a professorship in Religious History in Northland College.

Both of these fine young men have been valiant helpers in this Society.

## Why Forefathers' Day

We have a responsibility to pass on the inheritance left by men who pioneered in new understandings and true living for themselves and in constant thought of "those who shall come after us." Our problems are akin to theirs, with an even greater urgency, as life has become more complex. We may clarify our thinking and find guidance to meet our own problems by a study of the writings and labors of the early leaders and those of later date, as Hooker and Wise with their ideals of democracy; the Fathers of the Revolution, who set a pattern for our continuing fight for the dignity of man and the free life of the spirit; Bushnell who gave us an understanding of true education; Gladden who interpreted the Gospel's social aims and methods; the leaders in foreign missions and home missions and all those who gave themselves to the cause of Civil Rights, the Rights of Women, and pioneered in Christian unity. These men and women put the world on their debt forever. Yet how often are they little known, if not unknown, by our own people.

"The faith that moves us," is, quite simply, the belief that our heritage is best understood by a study of the things that the ordinary folk of America have done and thought and dreamed."

BRUCE CATTON

## Early New England Congregational Churches

<b>Connecticut</b>		1637	Springfield, First
1630	Windsor	1638	Dedham, Allin
1632	Hartford, First		Sandwich, Fed.
1635	Stamford, First	1639	Rowley
	Wethersfield		Yarmouth (Port)
1637	Springfield, First	1640	Sudbury, South
1639	Fairfield, First	1642	Edgartown, Fed.
	Milford	1644	Wakefield
	Stratford, First		Wenham
1642	New London, First	1646	Orleans, Fed.
1643	Guilford		(East)
1644	Branford	1649	Malden, First
1646	Saybrook (Old Saybrook)	1659	Hadley, First
1652	Farmington	1661	Northampton, First
	Norwalk	1663	Topsfield
1660	Norwichtown, First	1664	Newton, First (Center)
1665	Greenwich, First	1666	Marlborough
1667	Clinton	1669	Boston, Old South
1668	Middletown, First	1670	Hatfield
1670	Hartford, Second	1672	Danvers, First
	Woodbury	1673	West Tisbury
1674	Stonington, First	1678	Milton, First
1675	Wallingford	1679	Westfield, First
1677	Derby, First	1682	Haverhill (Bradford)
1683	Enfield	1683	Essex
1690	Woodstock	1684	Marblehead
1691	Waterbury, First	1692	Wrentham
1693	Glastonbury, First	1693	Swansea
	Old Lyme	1694	Middleboro, First
1695	Bridgeport, United	1696	New Bedford, First
	South Windsor	1698	Plympton
1696	Danbury, First		West Springfield, First
1697	Simsbury		
1698	Preston City (Norwich)		
	Suffield		
<b>Massachusetts</b>		<b>New Hampshire</b>	
1616	Barnstable (West)	1633	Dover, First
1620	Woburn, First		
1623	Weymouth, First, Heights (East)	<b>Maine</b>	
1632	Boston, First (Charlestown)	1673	York Village
	Lynn, First		
1633	Cambridge, First	<b>Rhode Island</b>	
1634	Ipswich, First & South	1643	East Providence, Newman
1635	Newbury, First	1680	Bristol, First
	Scituate (Center)	1695	Kingston

## Moderator's Message

On a cornerstone of a government building in the city of Washington there are inscribed these words: "The past is prologue." If we would know whence we came and whither we are going, we would know more of the history of our churches and of our fellowship. We honor the memory of the founding Fathers. By their faith, courage, hopes and prayers they laid the foundations and built the churches we know and love. The rich heritage of the past is priceless. If it is lost to view, it can never be recaptured.

As the years come and go, the personalities of the early pioneers recede into the past. We may not always remember them. We should never forget what they did for us. They built the meeting house; they forged a faith out of the depth of their experiences; they established the church to preserve the record of their faith written in word and deed. Then, may we rededicate ourselves to the tasks of our day, as they did in theirs.

GEORGE B. HASTINGS, Moderator of the General Council

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## The Budget of the Society

### Anticipated Expenses

Rent	\$ 511
Tel. & Tel.	50
Postage and Mailing	450
Supplies and Books	150
Meetings and Travel	350
Printing and Mimeo.	800
Secretarial asst.	2,420
Secretary	1,600
Advertising and Misc.	175
S. S. (Society's share)	9
Contingencies	500
	\$7,100

### Sources of Expected Income

The General Council	\$2,000
The American Board	500
The Board of Home Missions	750
The Conferences	1,350
The Churches	1,750
Individuals	700
Seminaries	500
	\$7,100

## Membership in the Society

1. Contributing National and State agencies are voting members of the Society and name representatives to the Board of Governors.
2. Churches contributing \$10.00 or more per year become full voting members and those contributing less become associate members of the Society.
3. Individuals contributing \$5.00 or more per year become sustaining (voting) members and those contributing less become associates of the Society.

All contributors receive the *News Letter* and other publications and reports of the Society.

NOTE: Contributions approved for Income Tax Credit by U. S. Income Tax Bureau

## A Message from the President of the United States:

To the Members and Friends of Center Church, joined in the 325th Anniversary of the First Church of Christ in Hartford, I send greetings. As the Church of Thomas Hooker, preserving an historic tradition of liberty you stand as an example of fundamental truth. The choice of leaders is the right of free people, informed, responsible to the will of God, and sensitive to the needs of their neighbors. In the furtherance of this tradition, you are joined by fellow citizens across the land.

DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER

October 20, 1957.

## THE CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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